

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMCONSUL DURBAN

UNCLAS STATE 115676

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPH, ETRD, SF

SUBJECT: "WASHINGTON POST"EDITORIAL ON SOUTH AFRICA

FOLLOWING EDITORIAL ENTITLED "WIDENING THE ATTACK
ON APARTHEID" WAS PUBLISHED BY "WASHINGTON POST"
MAY 4:

QUOTE THE NEW RESTRICTION ON TRADE WITH SOUTH AFRICA NOW
MAKING ITS WAY THROUGH THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS REPRESENTS
A GROWING FORCE IN AMERICAN POLITICS. NO LONGER IS
OPPOSITION TO APARTHEID MERELY A MINORITY CAUSE OR A
CAMPUS ISSUE OR, AS PRETORIA OFTEN CLAIMS, A POLICY
WHOSE SUPPORT IS CONFINED PRETTY MUCH TO THE
ADMINISTRATION FIGURES WHO PLUG IT, NAIVELY OR CYNICALLY
AS THE CASE MAY BE. ON THE CONTRARY, IT IS COMING TO
REPRESENT A GENUINE POPULAR MOVEMENT COMMANDING ITS
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OWN CONGRESSIONAL BASE.

QUOTE SO IT IS THAT THE HOUSE BANKING COMMITTEE, HARDLY
A COLLECTION OF BLEEDING HEARTS, HAS JUST APPROVED
WHAT WOULD BE THE FIRST CONGRESSIONAL CURB ON ECONOMIC
TIES WITH SOUTH AFRICA. DRAFTED BY REP. PAUL
TSONGAS (DMASS.), THE AMENDMENT WOULD PROHIBIT THE

EXPORT-IMPORT BANK, A GOVERNMENT AGENCY THAT FACILITATES AMERICAN TRADE, FROM FINANCING EXPORTS TO SOUTH AFRICA UNLESS THE PRESIDENT DETERMINES--AND THE CONGRESS AGREES-- THAT PRETORIA IS MAKING 'SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS TOWARD THE ELIMINATION OF APARTHEID.'

QUOTE WE ARE NOT ENAMORED OF THE IDEA OF ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA. THEY ARE A BLUNT WEAPON, PRESSING ON BOTH WHITES RESPONSIBLE FOR REPRESSION AND WHITES SEEKING REFORM, ON BLACKS WHO WELCOME THAT PRESSURE AS A MOVE AGAINST APARTHEID AND ON BLACKS WHO SEE IT AS AN INVITATION TO HARSHER RACIAL CONFRONTATION AND TO HARDSHIP FOR BLACKS AS WELL AS WHITES. THERE IS ALSO THE QUESTION, RAISED IN THE SENATE BANKING COMMITTEE, OF WHY SOUTH AFRICA ALONE SHOULD BE SINGLED OUT FOR ITS INTERNAL DEFECTS. THE ADMINISTRATION, WE NOTE, DID NOT SUPPORT THIS AMENDMENT. IT OBJECTS EVEN TO WELL-MEANING CONGRESSIONAL RESTRICTIONS ON EXECUTIVE FLEXIBILITY, AND IT DOES NOT WISH TO ENCOURAGE POLITICAL AMENDMENTS TO ECONOMIC BILLS.

QUOTE THE POLITICAL MEANING OF THE TSONGAS AMENDMENT IS NONETHELESS CLEAR. THE AMERICAN PUBLIC'S CONSCIOUSNESS OF APARTHEID IS BEING RASIED. FROM THE ADMINIS-
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TRATION, THE IDEA HAS SPREAD TO CONGRESS THAT AMERICAN RELATIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICA WILL INEVITABLY DETERIORATE FURTHER IF PRETORIA IS NOT SEEN TO BE MOVING WITH ALL DELIBERATE SPEED TO ALTER THE NATURE OF A SYSTEM THAT VIRTUALLY ALL AMERICANS, REGARDLESS OF THEIR DIFFERENCES ON TACTICS, REGARD AS AN ABOMINATION AND AS A TEMPTATION TO SOCIETY-WIDE VIOLENCE. MANY IN SOUTH AFRICA SEEM TO FEEL THEIR COUNTRY CAN TOUGH IT OUT: CIRCUMVENT OR SURVIVE THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION AND FIND MORE 'UNDERSTANDING' FOR APARTHEID ELSEWHERE IN THE AMERICAN BODY POLITIC. THE TSONGAS AMENDMENT SAYS SOUTH AFRICA IS WRONG. UNQUOTE. CHRISTOPHER

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